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E U L O G Y

OF

CORNELIUS CONWAY FELTON, LL.D., &c.,

WILLIAMS
COLLEGE
DUPLICATE
SOLD

ONE OF THE REGENTS OF THE

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF THE BOARD

BY

THEODORE D. WOOLSEY, LL.D.,

PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

MAY, 1862.

WASHINGTON:
PUBLISHED BY THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.

1862.

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EULOGY

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PHILADELPHIA:
COLLINS, PRINTER.

AT a meeting of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, held May 1, 1862, Professor Henry, the Secretary, having announced the death of Dr. Felton, one of the Regents, Professor Bache made a few appropriate remarks, and offered the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted.

Resolved, That the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution deeply mourn the loss of their fellow Regent, CORNELIUS CONWAY FELTON, the distinguished President of Harvard University, whose profound learning and ready use of the rich stores of ancient and modern lore, excited general admiration, while his genial temper, affectionate disposition, and open manners, endeared him as a friend to every member of this establishment.

Resolved, That in the death of President Felton, our country, in the hour of its trial, has lost a wise and influential citizen, our government a warm and eloquent supporter, Harvard University a learned and efficient head, and this Institution an active and valued Regent.

Resolved, That we sincerely condole with the bereaved family of President Felton, and offer to them our heartfelt sympathy in their deep affliction.

Resolved, That Dr. Woolsey be requested to prepare a suitable notice of President Felton, to be inserted in the journal of the Board of Regents.

Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be communicated by the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, to the family of the deceased, and to the Faculty and Corporation of Harvard.

E U L O G Y.

THE duty has been laid upon me of preparing a brief tribute to the memory of Cornelius C. Felton, late a regent of the Smithsonian Institution. I undertake this office the more readily, because a friendly and most pleasant acquaintance of nearly thirty years' standing, cemented by common pursuits and unbroken by any of those jealousies which sometimes divide men of the same literary calling, has enabled me to form a definite opinion of the worth and services of one whose death the country, in common with Massachusetts and with Harvard University, deplores.

CORNELIUS CONWAY FELTON, the son of worthy but by no means opulent parents, was born at West Newbury, Massachusetts, November 6, 1807. The first decided impulse in the direction of scholarship and of a taste for letters was given to him by Simeon Putnam, who kept a private school at North Andover, with whom he remained as a pupil a year and three months. In this year and a quarter prior to his entrance into college, Putnam awakened so great an enthusiasm in the mind of his pupil, that the

latter, according to a statement in manuscript drawn up by one of his friends, “read Sallust four times, Cicero’s Orations four times, Virgil six times, Dalzel’s *Græca Minora* five or six times, and the poetry of it till he could repeat nearly all of it from memory, the Annals and History of Tacitus, Justin, Cornelius Nepos, the Anabasis of Xenophon, four books of Robinson’s Selections from the Iliad, the Greek Testament four times, besides writing a translation of one of the Gospels, and writing a translation of the whole of Grotius *de Veritate*, which he brought in manuscript to college; also he wrote a volume of about three hundred pages of Latin exercises, and one of about two hundred pages of Greek exercises, and studied carefully all the mathematics and geography requisite to enter college.” That the severe study necessary in order to do all this in so short a time might be detrimental to his health will be readily believed. He suffered from these overstrained efforts during his residence in college and afterward. Still he continued his course of earnest study through his college life, devoting a good deal of spare time to extra Greek, and forming an acquaintance with several of the modern languages and with the Hebrew. Besides which he contributed to his own support in several ways, especially by keeping school during parts of his Sophomore and Junior years, and in the latter year by teaching mathematics for six months in the Roundhill school at Northampton under Messrs.

Cogswell and Bancroft. He was prepared, by this introduction into the art of teaching and by his excellent scholarship, for the employment in which he was engaged for two years from the time of his graduation—the charge of a high school at Geneseo, New York, which he undertook in company with two of his classmates. From Geneseo he was called back, in 1829, to his Alma Mater to fill the office of Latin tutor, from which department he was transferred the next year to the Greek. His election to the chair of College Professor in 1832 showed the estimation in which he was held by the authorities of the University. On the resignation of Dr. Popkin in 1833, who had the chair of Greek Literature upon the Eliot foundation, Mr. Felton was appointed his successor, and continued in this professorship until his elevation to the Presidency in 1860. Thus thirty years of his life were spent in cultivating and teaching Greek letters.

As a Greek scholar, he was not surpassed for breadth and accuracy by any other in the land. His nature was many-sided, and he strove after complete scholarship both in what pertained to the language, and in what pertained to all the branches of the literature of the Hellenic race. Yet, like every other scholar, he had his favorite departments of pursuit, while other sides of it had less attraction for him. To linguistics and general philology and to the verbal side of Greek learning he was not so

much drawn as to all the manifestation of the Greek mind and life. Here again it was Athens in her palmiest days; it was her unrivalled dramatic poets, and especially that prince of the ancient comedy, who discloses to us the life of Athens at the pinnacle of her renown, and when she was sliding down from her eminence—it was this age and these monuments of Greece which had the greatest charms for him. The spirit of Aristophanes lodged in Professor Felton; he had the same sense of the ludicrous, the same keen judgment of character, the same underlying earnestness of patriotism, the same political conservatism.

A mind which had such a strong relish for exhibitions of life in the concrete forms would be apt to convey pleasant and profitable instruction. Professor Felton seems to have been a very genial instructor, clear in his conceptions and explanations, sufficiently strict in grammatical analyses and in keeping his pupils to their tasks, and yet relieving the tedium of the recitation-room by lively illustrations of the author read, so that the lesson was not more a task than a pleasure, enriching and beautifying everything by references to ancient art, as well as by a pure manly taste which went along with his whole scholarship.

This æsthetical power of his mind deserves a more distinct mention. He had within him a love of art, and his judgment, natively sound, was improved by devotion to a language and a literature which cultivate the taste more than any other. To him, there-

fore, the life of Greece consisted not solely in its poets, orators, historians, and philosophers, but in the euphonies of its words, in the rhythm of its periods, in its wondrously exquisite and varied poetical metres, in its simple but grand architecture, in those works of its sculptors and founders which immortalized over again the materials of a literature already immortal.

Here we may add that he had two opportunities of inspecting the monuments of Greek art, and of visiting that land where so many of his thoughts had dwelt. In 1853, and the following year, he devoted five months of a European tour to Greece, ancient and modern, to her present life and the remains of her past glory; and again in 1858 he spent part of another summer in the same land. Whatever reminded of ancient days and enabled him to conceive more clearly and understand more fully the meaning of the ancient writers, together with those reliques of art which time and barbarism have spared—this naturally claimed his attention first, but he sympathized also with the free, hopeful, restored Greece of the present, he examined the workings of her political institutions, visited the halls of legislation at the capital, formed an acquaintance with the learned men who adorn the University of Athens, and returned in the faith that modern Greece has a noble destiny before her. He was led by his tours to connect the Greek and the Romaic languages more closely toge-

ther, to urge the importance of studying the latter, and to advocate the application of the modern pronunciation to the literature of the ancient tongue. Not long after his return from his first journey, in the year 1856, he published selections from modern Greek writers, accompanied with explanatory notes, and a little earlier enriched an American edition of Smith's "History of Greece" with a preface, notes, and a continuation of Greek History from the Roman Conquest until the present time.

While engaged in the daily duties of a laborious profession, Mr. Felton found leisure to prepare for the press a number of editions of Greek authors and other works within the same department. His maiden work of this kind was an edition of Homer's Iliad, published in 1833, with English notes—which were carefully revised and enlarged in subsequent editions—and with the addition of Flaxman's illustrations. Next, in 1840, he sent forth from the press a Greek reader, containing selections from writers of the best stamp—a work which has been repeatedly printed, and has maintained its ground among the principal introductions to the study of that language. This was followed in the next year by an edition of the Clouds of Aristophanes, with an introduction and a commentary, which appeared again in a revised form and was republished in England. In 1843, in conjunction with Professor Edwards, of Andover, and Professor Sears, then of the Baptist Theological Semi-

nary at Newton, he published a work entitled Classical Studies, consisting principally of translations from the German, his contributions being selections from the works of Frederic Jacobs. In 1844 he rendered a valuable service to classical literature by translating, in conjunction with Professor Beck, Munk's Treatise on Greek and Roman Metres. Three years afterward appeared his editions of the Panegyricus of Socrates—that much polished closet-oration of the “old man eloquent,” and of the Agamemnon of Æschylus—that difficult chef-d’œuvre of the earliest dramatist. Both of these passed into second editions. In 1849 he brought out an edition of the Birds of Aristophanes, and in 1852, “Selections from Greek Historians,” namely, from Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, Diodorus Siculus, Arrian, and Pausanias. In the course of the same year appeared a tribute from his pen to the memory of his immediate predecessor in the Eliot professorship, entitled “Selections from the Writings of Dr. Popkin, with a Biographical Sketch.”

These were his principal contributions through the press and bearing his own name, to the main study of his life. But we ought not to pass over his frequent lectures and anonymous writings tending to illustrate and recommend Greek learning, such as his four courses of Lowell Lectures, and his frequent contributions to the *North American Review*.

Nor ought the briefest sketch of Mr. Felton’s life

to omit his literary labors beyond his own immediate province. As his mind strove to grasp universal knowledge, and as he maintained a lively sympathy with the literature of most of the cultivated nations, so, from time to time, he poured forth through the press the gatherings of his rich and many-sided mind. Among his original works we mention his "Life of General Eaton," in the ninth volume of the first series of Sparks' "American Biographies;" his biographical notices accompanying Longfellow's "Poets and Poetry of Europe;" his articles in the *North American*, upwards of fifty, and in the *Christian Examiner*, upwards of twenty-five in number; his contributions to the *New American Encyclopædia*,* and others less elaborate in the daily journals. If with these we take into view the help which he lent in various ways to education and science, as one of the Massachusetts Board of Education, as one of the School Committee for the town of Cambridge, and as Regent of the Smithsonian —to which trust he was elected on the resignation of Mr. Choate, in 1856, and re-elected for the full term of six years in February, 1861—and if we bring into account, also, his labors for a number of years in the office of Regent in Harvard University, and that at the same time he gave instructions in a school under the charge of Professor Agassiz, we shall wonder that one man, besides the duties of a very laborious pro-

* Some of these were on Agassiz, Athens, Attica, Demosthenes, Euripides, and Homer.

fessorship, was able to do so much, and perhaps wonder still more that he did it all so easily to himself and so well. It is rare, we imagine, to find a life of so much faithful, patient industry united to a temper so genial and social as his, so capable of finding entertainment and recreation on every side.

The services of such an academical officer could not fail to be prized and honored. Years before his election to the presidency of Harvard, his name was prominent among those who were thought of for that post; and when President Walker felt compelled by ill-health to retire from the station which he had filled so wisely and satisfactorily, the voice of the public anticipated the votes of the boards which constituted Prof. Felton his successor. He was inaugurated into his new office July the 19th, 1860, and those who heard his address pronounced upon that occasion, if they had not known the man before, must have felt assured that his administration would be firm and vigorous. The distinct opinion which he there avows, that no offences against civil order can be tolerated in a college which would not be borne in the wider circles of citizens—that academical walls can furnish no refuge for crimes, nor academical relations justify outrages on gentlemanly propriety, or on the feelings of fellow-students, was one which commends itself to all who are acquainted with our higher institutions of learning, and which, if united in the carrying of it out with such kindness as was manifest in the cha-

racter of President Felton, would strengthen and secure everything that is good in a college life. Whatever temporary obstacle or local custom, "more honored in the breach than in the observance," might oppose for a time, it is certain that the claims of law and order would at length prevail, and the state of things afterwards become so much the better.

President Felton entered thus into his new duties, with the confidence of the wisest and best on his side, and gave himself up chiefly to administrative functions, not without deep regrets, we are sure, at leaving those pleasant toils which had filled thirty years of his life. But Divine Providence had scarcely invested him with his new authority when he was summoned away from these earthly responsibilities and labors. A little less than two years of his official life had elapsed, when the complaint of which he died—hypertrophy of the heart—showed itself in an aggravated form, after having manifested its presence in his system for some twenty years. He was not, however, so ill at first but that he could undertake a journey, and it was hoped that a change of climate might do him good. Setting out for Washington—where he intended to be present at a meeting of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution—he had reached the house of his brother in Chester, Pennsylvania, and was seized with an attack of disease during the ensuing night. Here he breathed his last, Wednesday, the 26th of February, 1862. His remains

were removed to Cambridge, where a sermon on his death was preached, March the 9th, by Dr. Peabody, Preacher to the University, and appropriate resolutions, in honor of his memory, were passed by the Governing Boards, the Faculties, and others.

We have spoken of President Felton as a scholar and a worker, earnest and successful, in the field where Providence placed him. But the man is far more in the scale than the scholar. Let us then look for a few moments at the man in his traits of mind and character, and in the conduct of life.

His mind, as may have already appeared from what we have said of his scholarship, was a rounded, well-balanced, many sided one, where no trait was deficient. Yet the predominance of the æsthetic faculty, with the attendant pleasure derived from art and the works of creative intellect, may have given that direction towards scholarship and belles lettres, towards the concrete form rather than the abstract metaphysical principle, which somewhat characterized him. His simple correct taste, and his judgment, which estimated probabilities aright, and looked below the show and the surface, although, no doubt, cultivated by the study of language, and especially of Greek literature, must have had, beyond question, an independent natural foundation. He had a native curiosity and thirst for knowledge, which felt and grasped on every side; if you wanted to know about Jasmin, the Provençal Burns, he had read his poems, he could

speak of the Finnish mythology, and in his later years especially, he entered with zeal into the progress of natural science. Nor ought his keen sense of the ludicrous and his humor to be forgotten here, which made him the most entertaining of companions without undermining the manliness of his character. And the easy play of his faculties, working rapidly and smoothly without jar or much effort, deserves especial notice.

Among the traits of President Felton's character may be mentioned kindness and sympathy united with moral energy, courage and firmness in acting up to his convictions. His kindly nature showed itself in the forms of sociality, friendliness and generosity reaching to self-sacrifice. His friendship extended widely beyond the borders of his way of thinking in religion and politics, and men of various opinions and convictions sought his companionship, and partook of his regards. Few men have had more friends or fewer enemies, and yet he never shrunk from avowing his own principles. He enjoyed society, of which, by his pleasantries and other colloquial powers he was made to be the life. "He was generous," says his friend Professor Peabody, "to the last degree; no income could have made him rich, while there were the needy around him; and of time, more precious than gold, and of the wealth of intellect, he was no less lavish than of the inferior goods, which he prized only as the means of making others

happy. The labor of hand and brain, which might have been employed in building up his own fame, was freely given to all who sought it. Many have been the literary works and enterprises with which his name was never connected, which owed a large portion of their merit and success to materials which he furnished, or to his advice, revision, or criticism." And the same friend bears witness to his sympathy with "every noble and generous work for human progress and well being."

If the stranger, after an evening's acquaintance, may have been led by Mr. Felton's companionableness and flow of mirth, to regard him as wanting in moral earnestness, such a judgment would be pronounced hasty and superficial by the many grave and good men who gave him their friendship and respect. He by no means lacked any of those qualities which constitute the man of an earnest and dignified life. As has been beautifully said of him, "his force of character, hidden on ordinary occasions, by his gentle and sunny temperament, appeared impregnable whenever it was put to the test." He had firm settled convictions and well digested rules of action; he had purposes which could not be shaken by other considerations than those addressed to the reason and conscience; he had a noble manly courage which could carry him onward in the face of opposition. These qualities, with fidelity, uprightness, and simplicity of character, as displayed in his college duties, and in the other rela-

tions of life, secured for him the esteem and respect of all.

The union of kindness and firmness, with sound judgment and perspicacity made him an excellent college officer. But for his character as a ruler over students we will appeal again to what Dr. Peabody says of him. "I well remember the early years of his official connection with the college; his fraternal sympathy with the students; his gentle discipline when forbearance was safe and right; his reluctant, yet uniform consent to sterner measures, when the cause of order and virtue demanded them; his tender consideration for those who were struggling as he had struggled, bravely and honorably against adverse circumstances; his readiness to sacrifice his own ease in aid of those who sought to transcend the required measure of study, to furnish facilities for their researches, and to contribute from the funds of his own thought and learning for their growth in knowledge. Such was his course during his entire life as a teacher; and could we number up the youth who have been animated by his example, stimulated by the genial fervor of his enthusiasm, encouraged by his patient and unselfish devotion to their welfare, and sustained in their worthy ambition after they left these halls by his persistent and effective friendship, we should have a record of quiet, unostentatious beneficence, that would distance and belittle many life-works of worldwide and long-enduring fame."

President Felton was in his feelings and opinions, like the greater part of scholars, a conservative, not without sympathy with forward movements in society, but led by his tastes and acquaintance with the past to look with suspicion on sudden changes in the established order of things. In a similar spirit he showed no mercy towards what he regarded as false pretensions to science. It will not soon be forgotten with what zeal he followed up the spiritualists, putting their claims to the test, driving them from point to point, and exposing what he considered to be intentional fraud. In his political principles he may be described as a conservative whig, a friend and admirer of Daniel Webster. In his religious faith he was a Unitarian: Dr. Peabody characterizes him as “reverent and devout, loving the Word and Ordinances of God, meekly yielding himself to the teaching and leading of the Saviour, strong in the hope that is full of immortality.”

He was twice married; the first time in 1838, to Miss Mary Whitney, who died in April, 1845, and again in September, 1846, to Miss Mary L. Cary, who survives him. He has left five children.

Such is a brief sketch of one of the recently deceased regents of the Smithsonian Institution*—a

* President Felton took a lively interest in the Institution, and actively participated in the proceedings of the Board. His communications, appearing in the reports of the Board are as follows:—In the Report for 1857, p. 79, “A Report on the Present of a Book from Greece,”

man, who, by his industry and vigor of mind, made himself; a man whose genial nature and social qualities created friends for him on every side; a man who to the highest attainments in one department, united in an uncommon degree a large and liberal acquaintance with the circle of knowledge; a man of fine tastes, of most kindly sympathies, of strict uprightness; a man who adorned his professorship by the best qualities of a teacher, and the mingled kindness and firmness of a wise disciplinarian, and who brought to the Presidential chair of Harvard the firm purpose to raise the standard of that ancient University in everything that was good and noble.

p. 82; one on "The purchase of Stanley's Indian Gallery," p. 88; one on "Prof. Henry's Communication, relative to the Telegraph," and in the Report for 1859, p. 104, "A Eulogy on Prof. W. W. Turner," and p. 106, one "On Washington Irving." In addition to which he gave several lectures on Greece, and made a number of confidential reports on communications relative to linguistics, which had been referred to him for examination by the Secretary.

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